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Thayer's "The Traitor's Heir" (Book Review)

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This symphony is being silenced to feed human convenience and consumption habits. Most get information sporadically, without context, making it difficult to form a coherent picture of environmental issues and their ramifications. This book expertly interweaves the current state of the environment with the biblical responsibility of man to care for God’s creation. Deforestation, desertification leading to climate change, watersheds, the carbon dioxide cycle, burning of fossil fuels, and resultant starvation and persistent poverty are all linked to each other so that the reader is able to follow the natural cycle of climate, flora and fauna on the environment and on humans living in it. With our divine charge to care for the poor (Deut. 15:11), Christians should be concerned about climate change.

The author is the executive director of Plant With Purpose, a nonprofit Christian environmental organization with operations in seven countries. His writing reveals his deep care for God’s creation, both human and environmental. He writes in a context of storytelling and discourse easily readable by the average layperson. The narrative is rich and engaging and will be of interest to those knowledgeable about the environment, and illuminating to those who are not. His honest discussion of the scope of global relief efforts is refreshing, including a contrast with the types of efforts that inadvertently encourage the persistence of poverty. He contrasts this with a thoughtful analysis of the causes of failure to solve poverty, and hopeful integrated solutions that have worked in Plant With Purpose’s experiences in the countries they serve. People and their environment are part of the same system; to harm one is to harm the other. This book is highly recommended and should be mandatory reading for all Christians and those interested in genuinely aiding the impoverished.

The Traitor’s Heir,
ISBN 9781782640752

Reviewed by Sherill L. Harriger, Library Director, Pontious Learning Resource Center, Warner University, Lakes Wales, FL

When is a traitor a traitor? That question is what confounds the reader of The Traitor’s Heir as the life of Eamon Goodman unfolds. Eamon grew up believing in the River Realm and the Master who rules with an iron fist. The Master, also known as Edelred, demands complete and utter servitude to him and him alone and assures unfaltering allegiance from the people with the aid of the Gauntlet, his chosen army. Being sworn in as a member of the Gauntlet, protecting the River Realm,
and possibly one day becoming a chosen Hand, is all that Eamon has ever aspired to; however, when the time comes for him to swear allegiance he hesitates – but why? Faltering for an instant and ignoring his misgivings, Eamon swears allegiance to the Master thus opening his mind and will to that of the Master. Subsequently, however, everything he has trusted from childhood is then turned upside down when he meets the true king and swears allegiance to him. Eamon soon learns that it is impossible to serve two masters.

Vainglory: The Forgotten Vice,  

Reviewed by Amy C. Rice, Access Services Librarian,  
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In Vainglory: The Forgotten Vice, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, professor of philosophy at Calvin College, expands upon one vice she discussed in Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies. As in Glittering Vices, Vainglory focuses on why learning about vices is important and what a person can do to combat them. She writes, “There’s no point in pointing out our moral defects if we don’t care, or if we do care but don’t know what to do about them” (6). Vainglory is dangerous for Christians in two ways: first, one may fall into the vice of vainglory by doing good things; second, a person may also be vainglorious by attempting to appear better than she is. Evagrius, one of the desert fathers DeYoung cites in this work, says of vainglory: “It is difficult to escape the thought of vainglory, for what you do to rid yourself of it becomes a new source of vainglory” (p. 31). DeYoung describes it in this way: if a person does good things, others recognize it. If others recognize it, the do-gooder is buoyed by the accolades. If one is not very careful, one may begin to care more about the recognition of doing good than in doing good itself. What, then, is a person to do? DeYoung agrees with Richard Foster and others: the spiritual disciplines that will help ward off vainglory are silence and solitude. Another means by which a person avoids vainglory is to remember the true source of glory: God and God’s action in the world. Overall, Vainglory is an accessible read. That is not to say it is easy reading; rather, it is a challenging but not impossible read for a non-philosopher. Highly recommended, along with her previous work, Glittering Vices.